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Ministry of Education

EDUCATION AGREEMENT TO HELP KOOTENAY-COLUMBIA STUDENTS

CASTLEGAR – Education Minister Shirley Bond, Aboriginal leaders and officials of the Kootenay-Columbia board of education today announced the signing of B.C.'s 42nd Aboriginal education enhancement agreement to help improve Aboriginal student achievement.

"The Kootenay-Columbia school district has worked hard to provide this framework for improving achievement levels for its Aboriginal students," said Bond. "Today's agreement, coming just after National Aboriginal Day, will launch a partnership between the First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other communities. The school district and all partners deserve congratulations for this historic first agreement."

Local Aboriginal communities, the Ministry of Education and the school district worked closely to develop goals to help improve student achievement which include:

- Improve the achievement and school success of all Aboriginal students.
- Enhance all students' understanding of Aboriginal cultural, history and language.
- Improve cross-cultural education and awareness for Aboriginal program staff and school staffs.
- Enhance Aboriginal parents' sense of belonging within the schools and enhance their involvement in students' Aboriginal culture, language and history instruction.

"The board of education of School District 20 is extremely pleased to be signing this Aboriginal education enhancement agreement that brings to the forefront a recognition and understanding of the values of Aboriginal culture," said Kootenay-Columbia board chair Mac Gregory. "This agreement is seen as a living plan that will provide for and ensure that the cultural and educational needs of all of our Aboriginal students will be met."

There are approximately 400 Aboriginal students in the Kootenay-Columbia school district. The district is located in the traditional territory of the Sinixt people and is home to status and non-status students from the Cree and many other First Nations, as well as Inuit and Metis students.

Forty-two B.C. school districts have signed Aboriginal education enhancement agreements to date. These agreements support the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda to build new relationships with First Nations, and to improve education and economic opportunities.

The agreements are one component of the Province's strategy to improve Aboriginal student achievement. Others include the new First Nations education jurisdiction agreement and developing Aboriginal content for K-12 curriculum.

The Province is investing an estimated $51.1 million a year – $1,014 per student – for Aboriginal education in 2007-08. The funds are used to support Aboriginal language and culture programs, Aboriginal support service programs, and other localized Aboriginal education programs.

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Media contact: Public Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Education
250 356-5963

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